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DEAR FRIENDS,

Whenever possible, we try to settle cases before they reach the court system. When parties can resolve disputes without burdening the already overloaded court, the bench is more available for those who need that deeper attention. Although we certainly argue our fair share of Legal Aid cases in court, there’s a lot we can do before we set foot in a courtroom to help parties come to terms.

There is much a good lawyer can do to keep a client out of court. It may be a matter of clearing up an administrative error or misunderstanding. For example, sometimes an agency makes a mistake and — while it might seem like a simple paperwork problem at first — we find a systemic problem with a harsh effect on hundreds of people’s lives. In these cases, one person who stands up and says “No, that’s not an acceptable way to treat me,” can make a difference for many others.

Sometimes, laws or rules that come from government agencies change, and public agencies and other stakeholders in local communities may not be aware of the change. They may need an extra nudge from attorneys who have been following the changes to the laws and understand what those changes mean to the people most affected.

Other times, educational systems form a maze of bureaucratic resistance to the individual needs of children. In these cases, a family needs someone to help them defend the legal rights of their child against the school district, whose broad focus is on the district’s resources rather than the individual rights of each student.

In the cases you’ll read about in these pages, Legal Aid attorneys gave a voice to clients — always with their clients’ best interests and wishes in mind. From whistleblowers to parents trying to get an education for their child, these clients stood for their rights under the law, opening the doors a little wider for the next person who encounters the same situation.

As a supporter of Legal Aid, you ensure that more than 10,000 individuals and families each year get help to fix paperwork errors, correct misunderstandings, and hold public and private organizations and officials accountable to the law. Sometimes these cases end up in court. But in many cases, the presence of an attorney means achieving justice without going to court, keeping people safe and stable in their lives, while saving the precious resources of the judicial system.

Thank you for making this possible. You are champions in the cause of equal justice for all.

Drew Schaffer, Executive Director
Eric Williams wasn’t looking to be a whistleblower, and he didn’t want any kind of lawsuit. But he spent five months on the streets because of an agency’s wrongdoing, and he felt like he had to speak up.

“I had to move out in a hurry,” says Eric. “I lost my place and everything I owned except what I could fit in one suitcase.”

Eric was enrolled in Minnesota’s Group Residential Housing Assistance (GRH) program, which pays for room and board for individuals at risk of institutional placement or homelessness. GRH received all of Eric’s Social Security payments plus money from the state and was supposed to provide a case manager to pay Eric’s rent and utilities and coordinate services such as rides to appointments. After his first case manager left, the agency didn’t assign Eric a new case manager for more than a year. When they eventually stopped paying his rent, Eric had real trouble.

EVICION

“I had no idea where those people were,” he says. “I was going it all on my own, and I had to cancel a lot of appointments. It was frustrating, I was angry every day. Then the landlord told me that nobody was paying my rent, and he had to kick me out. That’s something you don’t ever want to hear.”

Eric’s health care case manager helped him call Legal Aid. Supervising Attorney Anne Quincy investigated the case.

“Eric said his money had just been disappearing,” says Anne. “And he was right. The state was paying for services that Eric never received. When agencies accept money from clients, and money from the state that is designated for those clients, they are expected to follow through and provide the services.”

Eric ended up in a shelter while a case manager from another agency worked with him to find new housing. Meanwhile, Anne put together the facts and arguments and filed the Complaint under seal at State Court. Then she sent a letter to the Minnesota Attorney General’s (AG) office reporting the theft, and identifying Eric as the whistleblower.

SETTLEMENT

Months later, the AG’s office came back with good news. They had negotiated a settlement with the agency. The settlement amount was much higher than Anne had expected and, although the settlement did not include an admission of guilt, it was a clear indication that the agency was aware of wrongdoing. The settlement also included an agreement by agency staff to attend trainings and meetings regarding provision of GRH services.

“I wasn’t expecting any money,” says Eric, who received 15% of the money paid back to the state. “But it helps me feel better about what happened. I wanted someone to know how they treated me. They talked to me like I was a two-year-old child. I’d try to ask them questions and it was never a conversation, just a flat-out argument. So I gave up on talking to them, and let Anne do what she had to do.”

PUBLIC BENEFITS LAW

Whistleblower Case Vindicates Client
Anne is very happy with the result, not just for Eric but for others. Every year, the AG publishes a list of false claims act cases it settled, and how much money they recovered for the state. The agency will be listed, and that will open the door for other whistleblowers.

MOVING ON
Eric has removed himself from the GRH program. He is now living in a Section 8 apartment close to public transit, so he doesn’t need as much in the way of services. He is happy to be handling his own finances.

“It’s the first time I ever won anything,” he says. “I know I’m not the only one in that kind of situation. If you think you’re being done wrong, you need to speak up and get someone to help you do it. Anne told me she’d do everything she could to make it right, and she did. I’d recommend her and Legal Aid to anyone.”

“I know I’m not the only one in that kind of situation. If you think you’re being done wrong, you need to speak up and get someone to help you do it.”
Cory had known for a while that she needed a lawyer. She’d known since that terrible morning when she discovered that her husband Michael had been seeing another woman throughout their marriage. But she didn’t want to go to divorce court. She wasn’t ready for that.

Things happened quickly. Cory moved out with their three children. Michael had never hurt them, so she was fine with him continuing to see them. But then she discovered that he had put a tracking device on her phone. He kept showing up at her workplace and her parents’ house and leaving awful voice mails. He was starting to scare her.

A RESTRAINING ORDER
She went to a battered women’s shelter and got help to obtain a Harassment Restraining Order (HRO). Michael wasn’t allowed near her home or work or the children’s school. The drop-off for visitation was taken care of by a trusted intermediary. Cory’s next step was to get a lawyer. The advocate at the shelter had given her a card and told her to call.

FAMILY LAW
Mediation Provides Closure in Divorce and Harassment Case
Cory kept finding reasons to put off the call. She figured lawyers are expensive and she dreaded having to tell her story to another stranger. She heard Legal Aid was supposed to be free, but wasn’t sure it was true.

On the day she was served with divorce papers, she knew she couldn’t put it off any longer. Michael had an attorney, and she needed one, too. She called Legal Aid.

“Cory wanted to resolve everything as quickly as possible,” says Laura Leitch, a Legal Aid attorney in the Willmar office. “It was a very contentious relationship, but since the other party had an attorney, I was hopeful that we could resolve the case without going to court.”

**MEDIATION BEGINS**

Legal Aid has a strong partnership with the Volunteer Attorney Program, so Laura was able to quickly line up a volunteer mediator. The parties scheduled a mediation before the date of the first hearing.

They had a number of issues to resolve. Michael wanted the HRO removed and he wanted 50/50 legal and physical custody of the children. Cory wanted to protect herself and the children, and she wanted the threats and harassment to stop completely. Michael claimed that she’d been turning the children against him. Cory wanted Michael to stop saying anything to the children about their conflict.

Neither Cory nor Michael wanted to go to court. They both agreed to work with the mediator. Fortunately, the division of property proved uncomplicated. But the issues related to the threats and harassment remained.

“We wrapped the HRO and the marriage dissolution cases together,” says Laura. “We were able to put protections in the Marital Termination Agreement that would outlast any protections Cory could have gotten from an HRO.”

**DISPUTE RESOLVED IN TWO MONTHS**

The mediation resulted in a resolution within two months. Because both parties were willing to negotiate through their attorneys, they could understand what was possible, what was legal, and where they should stand their ground and demand their rights. The lawyers helped them look past their immediate fears to a long-term, viable plan.

”It’s helpful when both parties have an attorney,” says Laura. “It’s so much more efficient. Without an attorney, the parties might not be familiar with likely outcomes. They don’t know what’s realistic, or what’s a good deal and what isn’t, so they might argue the wrong points and end up with something that really isn’t in their best interest.”

The mediation process also reduces the burden on the court system, and it moves things along more quickly.

“Getting closure in a divorce case that goes to trial can take well over a year,” says Laura. “Mediation is better for everyone, and it happens so much faster.”

The wording of Cory and Michael’s agreement, signed by both parties, was clear. Cory is confident that it’s legally sound, and she and her children have the peace of mind and closure that a finalized divorce brings.
The first time Melissa Dosick Riethof, Special Counsel at Meagher & Geer, P.L.L.P., entered the complicated maze of special education law, she wasn’t representing a client. She was the mother of a child with a new diagnosis, and she was overwhelmed.

“I’m a lawyer so I thought I would just go research and find the answer,” she says. “Turns out it’s a very complex answer. I figured it out and then thought, ‘Wow, how do you do this if you’re not a lawyer?’ I called Legal Aid and asked, ‘Do you need volunteers?’”

GETTING STARTED ON A PRO BONO CASE

Legal Aid does need volunteers, especially lawyers willing to work in the rapidly evolving area of special education. Pro Bono Project Coordinator Kirsten Olson put Melissa in touch with Dan Stewart, Supervising Attorney in Legal Aid’s Minnesota Disability Law Center (MDLC).

Melissa attended a couple of MDLC trainings on special education law, and for her first case, Dan assisted with all aspects of the representation. “Dan provided total support, and I felt completely backed throughout the process,” says Melissa. After that, she took on two cases of her own for full representation.

“There are a lot of good special education advocacy websites where you can get information,” says Melissa. “But sometimes the questions are so intricate that it’s hard to know what to ask or which statute to cite. I don’t know how you’d do the research without a legal background. Of course, the school districts know that.”

Melissa has found that school districts respond immediately to the presence of an attorney, and some parents have commented that school officials become much more eager to compromise when an attorney becomes involved.

Communication is a major part of Melissa’s role in a special education case. She researches the law carefully so she can help the parents understand what the school is offering their child, and what they can realistically expect the school to provide. Her job is to ensure that the school complies with the law in response to the family’s requests.

ADVOCATING FOR A FOURTH-GRADE

One of Melissa’s first clients was Matt Prior, a fourth-grader with a new diagnosis. His parents had reached an impasse in their communication with the school.

“Melissa was a godsend for us,” says Matt’s mother, Kim. “She guided my husband and me through the special education process with great knowledge and professionalism. Her presence changed the dynamics with the school system, and she stayed with us to make sure that Matt’s updated IEP (Individual Education Plan) was detailed and appropriate.”

As for Matt, he is doing well with his updated IEP. He continues to love school, and he has perfect attendance so far this year.

“The impact of Melissa’s work is huge for our family,” Kim says. “We’re so grateful to have the legal protections that come with an IEP drafted by an attorney who understands the law.”

A GREAT NEED FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION VOLUNTEER ATTORNEYS

MDLC handles a wide range of special education cases, from routine eligibility and programming concerns to more challenging discipline and restraint/seclusion issues. Yet MDLC lacks the resources to represent every family that needs help.

“Smart, dedicated, and insightful volunteers like Melissa, who are willing to take on these complex and rewarding cases, are absolutely critical for
“I’m a lawyer so I thought I would just go research and find the answer. Turns out it’s a very complex answer. I thought, ‘Wow, how do you do this if you’re not a lawyer?’”

Melissa continues to attend all of the trainings she can on special education law. As she gains experience and knowledge in this area of law that is still new to her, she’ll be able to streamline the process and work more efficiently and independently. She already brings the compassion and understanding that come with personal experience.

“With special education law, you’re working with people’s kids, their heart and soul,” says Melissa. “If someone is treating your child poorly, it’s so personal. You need a trusted advocate standing beside you.”

our work,” says Dan. “Especially as the number of special education cases coming into our office continues to increase, volunteers enable us to serve more families, and they make all the difference for children in untenable situations.”
FINANCIAL STABILITY

Fighting Back Against Fraud Accusation

“I don’t know what I would’ve done trying to fight my soon-to-be ex and the county on my own. It helped my self-esteem knowing I had someone in my corner.”
put up with 30 years of abuse, but after those last two years, I had to get out. I had to do it when he was gone.”

Jane, a senior who suffers from depression, anxiety, and PTSD, arranged everything ahead of time. When her husband, a long-distance trucker, was on the road, she moved. By the time he came home, she was housed in a new place, her address confidential.

She didn’t pick up her phone, but he left more than 30 furious, berating voice mail messages in a few days. Among other things he said, “You’re not gonna get any money. The bank account is closed.”

Jane applied for a restraining order. The judge granted it immediately, although her husband contested. Jane put her name on the waiting list for divorce help from Legal Aid’s St. Cloud office. Her name came up, and she started working with Staff Attorney Karla Krueger.

HELP WITH FRAUD CASE
Just when Jane was starting to believe things might work out, she received a notice from the county. They said Jane had committed fraud by not reporting income to her bank account. Her food support would be suspended for one year, and she would be penalized for funds received.

Jane was shocked. Right after the voice mails, she had tried to log on to their joint bank account, but she couldn’t. When she went to the bank, they told her he had taken her off the account. She figured it was just a misunderstanding, so she went to the county workers and explained everything.

“They kept arguing with me,” says Jane. “It was so frustrating. They kept saying they were sorry, but they wouldn’t actually listen to me and they wouldn’t budge. I was in tears. They asked me to sign a paper waiving my rights to a hearing, but I was not going to admit that I had committed fraud. I am a law-abiding citizen. I’ve only had one traffic ticket in my whole life.”

Jane called Karla for help.

“Jane was living on very little,” says Karla. “She had minimal income from Social Security. The Medical Assistance and food support were very important to her.”

Jane and Karla challenged the fraud charge, which included notice that Jane was responsible for “overpayments” of $190 for food benefits and $760 for Medical Assistance. They had the transcripts of the 30 voice mails, and they had bank records showing that the funds deposited in the account — even if it had been accessible to Jane — were gone immediately to cover an overdraft.

AN ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE’S DECISION
“The county was not willing to settle,” Karla says. “Jane’s car had been repossessed, so she had no transportation. I went to her house and we had the hearing with the administrative judge by phone. The judge understood the situation right away.”

The judge came back with a fully favorable decision. Jane will continue to receive her benefits, and she doesn’t have to pay anything back. If they hadn’t been successful in the administrative hearing, Karla was prepared to take the case to District Court.

“Without an attorney, I don’t know if I would have won,” says Jane. “Karla put it to the county workers. She said, ‘Hey, you’re not going to do this.’ I would’ve tried to do what she did, but I wouldn’t have spotted the tiny things like she did. I wouldn’t have had the case history and the knowledge.”

WHAT THE SETTLEMENT MEANT TO JANE
Food support of $100 per month might not seem like much, but it makes all the difference for Jane. It means she’s able to continue bowling with the league she’s belonged to since 1997. She can go into town for a pizza now and then, and participate in the community. She can pay for gas and insurance for her car.

“The fraud accusation was a terrible burden for Jane,” says Karla. “She talked about the sleepless nights it caused her. She’s like a different person now — much lighter and brighter.”

“It’s true,” Jane says. “I don’t know what I would’ve done trying to fight my soon-to-be ex and the county on my own. It helped my self-esteem knowing I had someone in my corner. It’s made me stronger. Now I’m strong enough to stand up for myself, and I know there’s help out there if I need it.”
HOUSING AND FAMILY LAW

Advocacy Protects Housing Vouchers for Survivors of Domestic Violence

“Housing vouchers are like gold,” says Staff Attorney Joey Dobson. “There’s nothing more valuable to a low-income tenant. The waiting list is years long.”

GIGI’S STORY
Gigi and her husband had separated because of his abuse. Gigi came home from work one day and found that her husband had packed up all of her belongings and given notice to her landlord. He forced her to go with him to his apartment and tracked all of her movements through her phone. He controlled the mail so she couldn’t receive or reply to notices.

When Gigi finally escaped months later, she went to the housing authority to see about her housing options. They said it was too late; her voucher had been terminated. She came to Legal Aid for help.

“It wasn’t difficult to see the connection between the domestic violence and the loss of her housing voucher,” says Staff Attorney Dorinda Wider. In 2017, Housing & Urban Development (HUD) issued new guidance to public housing authorities regarding the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). The new VAWA guidance directs housing providers to think broadly about the effects of domestic violence, taking into account emotional manipulation, threats and economic consequences.

Dorinda asked the housing authority to reinstate Gigi’s voucher pursuant to VAWA. She directed their attention to the law and to Gigi’s documented history of domestic violence victimization and police records of abuse. The housing authority agreed in settlement to give Gigi a voucher immediately, and she is now securely housed in a new location. Legal Aid is helping with her divorce case.

“If someone’s voucher disappears, domestic violence and housing advocates should take another look,” Dorinda says. “Remind the housing provider that their funder, HUD, is telling them to take a broad look at domestic violence. It is more than just physical abuse.”

JANET’S STORY
In a similar case, Janet lost her housing voucher after police entered with smoke and flash grenades searching for drugs. Although the warrant was actually for Janet’s abusive boyfriend, the housing authority started a process to terminate Janet’s voucher.

“We jumped in to defend her,” says Staff Attorney Joey Dobson. “We felt very strongly that Janet had protections under VAWA, that the criminal activity was done by her abuser, and that she should not lose that voucher for something that was no fault of her own.”

Janet had plenty of evidence of domestic violence. Her boyfriend served time for a number of charges, including felony domestic assault, but the housing authority’s policy said that a voucher holder may be required to obtain an Order for Protection (OFP) to keep their abuser from coming around.

Janet had obtained an OFP before, but it didn’t help because the police wouldn’t fully enforce it. To file for another one would just make her abuser more angry and more dangerous. He had numerous connections in and out of prison, and there were many ways to retaliate against Janet and her children without violating the OFP.

“An OFP should not be a condition for someone to save their housing,” says Staff Attorney Georgina Santos, Joey’s co-counsel in Janet’s
case. “Dorinda has pointed out numerous times over the years to the housing authority that it is actually illegal to require a VAWA-protected individual to take affirmative action.”

The new VAWA guidelines supported Janet’s position, and Legal Aid pushed back hard against the suggestion that she file for another OFP. In a demand letter, Joey and Georgina let the housing authority know that Janet was prepared to enforce her rights by all means necessary. Eventually, the housing authority agreed.

“An OFP is not a magic shield,” says Joey. “Many of our clients struggle to get the police to effectively enforce their OFPs. Sometimes the OFP actually just puts them in more danger.”

Vigorous representation in these two cases put local housing authorities on notice that HUD’s understanding of VAWA is a holistic one, with an eye on the many ways domestic violence can destabilize a household.

**HOUSING RIGHTS FOR SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE**

Both Gigi and Janet faced loss of long-term housing because of the actions of violent partners. Both are protected under the law from that loss, and Legal Aid defended their right to retain their housing vouchers. Vigorous representation in these two cases put local housing authorities on notice that HUD’s understanding of VAWA is a holistic one, with an eye on the many ways domestic violence can destabilize a household. Legal Aid is committed to protecting the housing rights of people who suffer from domestic violence.
Sophia Grujin moved from Cincinnati to be closer to her daughter Vera. She was 90 years old, so the move was a big adjustment. After three years of trying to find a suitable place, Sophia settled into an assisted living facility and lived there for seven years.

**NOTICE OF EVICTION FROM ASSISTED LIVING FACILITY**

In April of 2017, Vera received a voice mail from her mother’s caseworker telling her that Sophia, who was on economic assistance, might have to move.

“That call was so bizarre,” Vera says. “I called back and said, ‘What on earth are you talking about?’ My mother’s caseworker said the care facility felt they could no longer care for her.”

Vera, who had been unaware of any problems, was shocked. She and Sophia asked for a meeting as soon as possible with the nurse practitioner and social worker. In the middle of the meeting, the door opened, and the Resident Social Worker and Director of Nursing joined the meeting.

“We were ambushed,” says Vera. “I thought we were brainstorming solutions. I had no idea the decision had already been made. Those two women stood over my mother, who is a tiny lady, and put her through the wringer. They were so cruel.”

The administrators challenged Sophia on a number of issues, saying things like, “Go on, prove to us that you can get a glass of water without help.” They said she’d broken the rules by asking staff to take the cellophane off a pill bottle and open a package. Sophia’s mind is sharp and clear, and she was unaware of any such rule. She replied that each time, staff had volunteered to help.

When Vera demanded that they stop haranguing Sophia, the social worker handed over an eviction notice and a letter saying that services would stop in just a few days. If Sophia stayed in the apartment, no one would help to care for her.

At 100 years old, Sophia was being evicted with less than 30 days’ notice.

“How was I to find a place for her with an eviction notice on her record?” says Vera. “They dumped us in the street, and I was completely lost.”

**LEGAL INTERVENTION SAVES THE DAY**

Vera, pressed for time and overwhelmed, called the ombudsman, who referred her to Legal Aid’s Senior Law Project. Staff Attorney Gordon Solo took the case, much to Vera’s relief.

“Once a lawyer steps in, the dynamics change,” says Gordon. “The management agreed not to file an eviction, and to give Sophia and Vera six extra days without rent to move Sophia’s belongings and clean the apartment. They also returned the full deposit.”

Sophia’s situation is not an unusual one. The Senior Law Project sees situations like this time and again. They know which facilities are frequent offenders.
“The case wasn’t complicated,” says Gordon. “The facility gave improper notice, and their grounds for termination were ridiculous. Most facilities want to avoid litigation. They may go after someone who is vulnerable, but they back off once a lawyer is involved.”

“You think you’re safe,” says Vera. “But this can happen to anyone. My mother is 100 years old, and that meeting was one of the ugliest examples of humanity I’ve ever witnessed. It looked like they were terminating everyone who uses a wheelchair.”

Sophia and Vera considered bringing a lawsuit, but decided against it. Without an eviction on Sophia’s record, Vera was able to find a new facility that was a good fit. The extra six days gave her time to complete the move. The entire experience and transition were so difficult, Sophia and Vera preferred to leave the conflict and unpleasantness behind.

“I am grateful to everyone at Legal Aid who helped make my move smoother,” says Sophia, who appreciates the more relaxed atmosphere and better staffing ratios in the new place.

HELPING SENIORS AVOID LITIGATION
“It was a good result,” says Gordon. “Sophia avoided the stress of staying in a hostile environment with extra costs. Most of our elderly clients don’t need or want the stress of litigation. My job is to find out what the client wants and needs, and get it for them.”
Cathy Haukedahl received the HCBA Pro Bono Publico Distinguished Service Award in recognition of career-long pro bono work. The Award is presented in recognition of the time, knowledge and devotion given in service to the community.

Cathy recently retired as MMLA’s executive director, where she guided Legal Aid through the fallout from the Great Recession. As demands for services skyrocketed and the organization faced significant funding decreases, Cathy helped Legal Aid to remain a leader in addressing the access to justice gap. She saw Legal Aid through development of such innovative programs as medical-legal partnerships and expansion of domestic violence court projects and community clinics. These programs gave more clients access to the legal system, and expanded opportunities for lawyers to serve the community through pro bono work. Cathy also served on multiple task forces and committees that address important issues in the legal community.

Deputy Director Greg Marita says, “MMLA’s executive director must be sensitive to the needs and voices of many constituent groups such as our clientele, staff, board and funders. Cathy understood this complexity. She treated all with respect while keeping Legal Aid’s mission – to serve the legal needs of the most vulnerable – at the core of all she did. I feel fortunate to have worked with and learned from this very impressive and committed advocate.”

Cathy was also recognized by her peers at the Minnesota Legal Services Coalition with the 2017 Pillar of Justice Award, in recognition of her undeterred and exceptional support of equal justice throughout her career.

Anne Henry has been one of the preeminent figures in the fight for the rights of people with disabilities in Minnesota. She joined Legal Aid’s litigation team in 1975 in a federal class action suit that challenged conditions in state hospitals, and eventually led to the closing of Minnesota’s big state institutions in favor of community-based programs. In addition to general legal expertise, Anne mastered the intricacies of health care law and policy. She is widely recognized as one of the top experts in the state on health care issues affecting people with disabilities and as a highly skilled policy advocate.

“Anne’s encyclopedic knowledge has pushed Minnesota’s health care and service systems to become a national model of support for people with disabilities,” says Pamela Hoopes, Deputy Director of Legal Aid’s Minnesota Disability Law Center. “Her work has laid the foundation for disability rights advocacy for a generation of civil rights attorneys and individuals with disabilities.”
Maria Patino, bilingual paralegal/intake specialist in Legal Aid’s Willmar office, was named 2017 Unsung Legal Hero by Minnesota Lawyer. This award honors law office employees who consistently go above and beyond the call of duty, often behind the scenes. Honorees are nominated by colleagues, supervisors, and peers, and chosen by a panel of prior winners of the award.

Elsa Marshall, Education for Justice Coordinator at Legal Services State Support, received the 2017 Legal Services Advocate Award. The Becker Awards are presented annually by the Minnesota State Bar Association for work that exemplifies the dedication and commitment to helping low-income individuals that marked the career of the late Bernard Becker, a renowned legal aid attorney, law professor and magistrate judge.

More than 20% of the Willmar population is of Hispanic or Latinx origin, and a large portion of Legal Aid’s Willmar clients speak only Spanish. For 20 years, those clients and others have had an ally in Maria Patino. She manages the Willmar office, helps interpret for clients, completes intakes in Spanish, and assists in case management.

“Maria’s work is of the utmost quality. She knows her community and can provide advice and referrals on a wide spectrum of issues,” says Dan Morris, Supervising Attorney of the Willmar office. “Clients trust Maria, and her hard work enables us to serve more clients in the community.”

Elsa has spent the last 20 years expanding Legal Aid’s statewide impact through organizing community education outreach events for MMLA and developing and updating an impressive library of hundreds of self-help legal materials, including translation into several languages. She is an expert at writing in plain language, breaking complicated information down into easy, digestible steps for all readers, including those with no legal background or low literacy skills.

“Elsa is a tireless advocate for Legal Aid’s clients,” says State Support Supervising Attorney Mary Kaczorek. “She brings a client-centered focus to every conversation, and her suggestions often guide decisions in other areas of our work, like training planning, website design and communication. The impact of her unique perspective and skill set is felt throughout the state.”

The Minnesota State Bar Association conferred its Emerging Leader Award on Supervising Attorney Luke Grundman for his commitment to excellence in the legal services field. The award recognizes exemplary dedication to providing zealous and skilled legal representation for low-income and disadvantaged clients.

In his 10 years working at Legal Aid, Luke has worn many hats to benefit the program and clients, including combating the discriminatory effects of the foreclosure crisis; undertaking policy and legislative work in the areas of consumer and housing law; and running the medical-legal partnership at the Hennepin County Medical Center’s Whittier Clinic. Luke now manages the housing unit in Legal Aid’s Minneapolis office.

“Luke embodies the best qualities of a Legal Aid attorney,” says Deputy Director Greg Marita. “He has a deep-seated belief that all people are entitled to be treated fairly and with dignity. When an entity or person deprives another of these basic rights, Luke fully commits his impressive legal skills and talents to remedy the situation.”

Safe Avenues, the Domestic Abuse/Sexual Assault victim advocacy organization that serves much of central Minnesota, selected Dan Morris, Supervising Attorney of Legal Aid’s Willmar office, for its Hope for Tomorrow Award. The award honors individuals who provide advocacy and justice to
survivors, help build communities intolerant of domestic and sexual violence, and work to change people’s lives for the better.

Dan has been dedicated to building a strong and cooperative relationship with Safe Avenues and other organizations, multiplying the impact of all. He has arranged for training of all staff in the Willmar office on issues such as safety planning, family law, and immigration issues faced by survivors. He participates in community collaboratives that work to create a system-wide approach to domestic violence.

“Dan is a role model to other staff,” says MMLA Deputy Director Ann Cofell. “His service to each client in a domestic violence situation is professional and always provided with understanding of and compassion for their unique struggles. He is training a new cohort of lawyers at Legal Aid to be skilled advocates in this work. Legal Aid and the Willmar community are fortunate to benefit from the quality of Dan’s work, and the manner in which he does it.”

**SELF-REPRESENTED LITIGATION NETWORK’S “BEST FORMS EVER” CONTEST**

Legal Services State Support made a good showing this year in the first-ever Best Forms Contest by the Forms and Technology Working Group of the Self-Represented Litigation Network (SRLN). SRLN’s goal is to recognize civil legal forms that utilize plain language, design, and interview and instruction elements, helping self-represented litigants through the process of filling out court forms. Another goal is to collect a critical mass of forms as examples for other legal services organizations.

“The State Support team works together to create high-quality materials useful to all people with legal problems,” says Mary Kaczorek, Supervising Attorney at State Support. “We are so pleased to receive these awards recognizing Elsa and Jenny’s hard work.”

Legal Services State Support’s forms and other community legal education materials on LawHelpMN.org are an integral part of Minnesota’s civil legal services delivery system.

**Elsa Marshall**, Education for Justice Coordinator, won in the Best Static Form category for the Delegation of Parental Authority Form. **Jennifer Singleton**, Legal/Technology Projects Manager, was chosen winner in the Best Automated Form category with the Motion to Modify Child Support or Spousal Maintenance form.

*thank you* TO OUR OUR SPEAKERS AND HONOREES FROM 2017

**LAW DAY TESTIMONIAL DINNER**

Keynote: Author, Leslie Morgan Steiner
Honoree: Stearns County Attorney Janelle Kendall

**ST. CLOUD ACCESS TO JUSTICE LUNCHEON**

Secretary of State Steve Simon

**BAR EXAMINATION**

Jim Eppel, UCare; Mayra Garcia-Rivera, Minneapolis Public Schools
## FINANCIALS

### REVENUE & EXPENDITURES | 2017

#### REVENUE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United Ways</td>
<td>$474,565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal</td>
<td>3,661,686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>4,203,106</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foundations</td>
<td>896,128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government</td>
<td>829,316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fund for Legal Aid</td>
<td>1,300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Services Advisory Committee (LSAC)</td>
<td>1,435,247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Support and LSAP</td>
<td>402,044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellowships/Clerks</td>
<td>225,446</td>
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<td>Attorney Fees</td>
<td>361,351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>543,523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$14,332,412</strong></td>
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#### EXPENDITURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poverty Law</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disability Law</td>
<td>2,262,647</td>
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<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>LSAP</td>
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<tr>
<td>State Support</td>
<td>620,924</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>268,881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$14,250,354</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Prior Reserve: 2,607,953  
Year End Reserve: 2,690,011

### CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEETS | 12.31.17

#### ASSETS

**CURRENT ASSETS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asset</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash and Cash Equivalents</td>
<td>$2,131,431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receivables:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Grants and Contracts</td>
<td>1,732,292</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pledges and Other</td>
<td>88,659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepaid Expenses</td>
<td>69,444</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,021,826</strong></td>
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**PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT, at cost**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less Accumulated Depreciation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT (NET)</strong></td>
<td><strong>972,473</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**OTHER LONG-TERM ASSETS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funds Held by Community Foundation</td>
<td>2,972,026</td>
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<tr>
<td>Client Escrow Funds</td>
<td>52,405</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL OTHER LONG-TERM ASSETS</strong></td>
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</table>

**TOTAL ASSETS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL ASSETS</strong></td>
<td><strong>$8,018,730</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

**CURRENT LIABILITIES**

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<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<td>Accounts Payable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Client Trust Deposits</td>
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<td>Accrued Expenses</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</strong></td>
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**NET ASSETS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unrestricted Net Assets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Temporarily Restricted Net Assets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Permanently Restricted Net Assets</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL NET ASSETS</strong></td>
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</table>

**TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</strong></td>
<td><strong>$8,018,730</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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The number of Minnesotans seeking legal assistance continues to rise. Your support — whether through sharing your time or making a monetary donation — makes it possible for us to meet increasing demands and provide much needed assistance for Minnesotans struggling to meet their basic needs. When you contribute to Legal Aid, you contribute to a stronger community. You make someone’s day a bit brighter. You change lives for the better.

We hope you’ll consider a contribution based on what works best for you. **Consider these options:**

**Make a monetary donation.** Any amount allows us to provide invaluable help to people in need. Visit our site at mylegalaid.org/donate to make an online donation, or contact our office to discuss your contribution.

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**Volunteer.** If you are an attorney, you can share your talents directly with clients in need. To learn more visit mylegalaid.org/get-involved.

**To learn more** or seek assistance, contact us via email, phone or the web.

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*Legal Aid makes every effort to properly acknowledge each of our donors. If we have misspelled or omitted your name, please let us know, by calling 612-746-3709. We will correct it in future publications. An *indicates deceased.*
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### BY THE NUMBERS

#### CASES CLOSED | RACE

- **African American**
- **African Born**
- **American Indian**
- **Asian**
- **Chicano/Latino**
- **Multi-racial**
- **White**

#### CASES CLOSED | AGE

- <5
- 5–18
- 19–59
- 60–64
- 65+

---

Craig S. Davis
Libby Davydov
Margaret Dean
Aaron Decker
Toni Decker
Cindy Chen Delano
Madelaine Delgado
Robert L. DeMay
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Through our health care outreach more than 930 families and individuals received health insurance valued at more than $7.6 million.
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Congratulations and thank you

The 2017 Associates’ Campaign blasted through all records again this year, raising over $108,000!

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The Associates’ Campaign carries out a friendly competition to benefit Legal Aid’s clients. Firms are grouped by number of associates and compete for the top spots. This year’s top-donating firms in each category are:

40+ Associates
Robins Kaplan LLP*

26-36 Associates
Briggs and Morgan, P.A.

15-25 Associates
Kinney & Lange, P.A.

7-14 Associates
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1-6 associates
Patterson Thuente Pedersen, P.A.

* A special thank you to the Robins Kaplan LLP associates, who have held the top spot since we began keeping records. They brought in over $13,000 this year with 100% participation.

100% PARTICIPATION
Congratulations to these firms — 100% of their associates donated to the 2017 One Hour of Sharing Associates’ Campaign.

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<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Minneapolis</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
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<td>St. Cloud</td>
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